

AN ANALYSIS OF STUDENT
AND PARENT OPINIONS TOWARD
DOING HOMEWORK FOR THIRD
GRADE STUDENTS

A MASTER'S PROJECT

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by

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

As professional educators, teachers are constantly involved in helping students learn. Daily class schedules are filled with an increasing variety of lessons from the expanding curriculum. The teachers are faced with the challenge of meeting the needs and learning styles of an ever-changing school population. Homework is a way to expand the school day by sending lessons home. But, what is the "report card" on assigning homework to primary children?

In today's society, educators and parents alike wish to encourage children to become lifetime learners. Children spend more time at home than in school. In their research Paschal, Weinstein, and Walberg (1984) calculated the amount of time a child has for learning at home as compared to school. Making some assumptions, they concluded that in twelve years of schooling almost three times as much learning time is spent at home. Using this time resource, parent input, and current research about homework, the teacher can be the facilitator to help parents continue the learning process at home.

Students enjoy and benefit from taking an active part in planning their own learning. Existing research, however, has not frequently explored the opinions of students in this age group. When students' opinions about homework are incorporated in the planning of homework, the effect will be to motivate students.

At the elementary level, parent involvement is an important relationship that is related to homework. Research has determined students' success is enhanced when parents support their children by being involved with their homework. Homework gives

the parent and child an opportunity to communicate on the importance of schoolwork and learning.

When teachers are aware of parent opinions, teachers may be able to help parents learn how to help their children build positive attitudes about school and homework. Students' positive attitudes toward school are good indicators of day-to-day success in school.

Some researchers recommend that students have a particular time and place to complete homework. The researcher sought to determine whether third graders are developing time management skills by planning a special time and place to do homework.

By understanding the above factors from the viewpoint of the students and parents of her present classroom, the researcher hoped to incorporate these findings into the homework assignments of her future classes.

Statement of Purpose

The purpose of this study was to survey students and parents about homework related behaviors and attitudes. More specifically, two eight-item surveys were constructed to collect data regarding student and parent opinions on homework.

Assumptions

In order to carry out this study a questionnaire was used to measure students' and parents' opinions toward homework. The author assumed that the students and parents honestly answered the questionnaire. Similarly, honesty was assumed in the representation of the data on a forced choice yes-no instrument to compare opinions.

Limitations

A limitation of this study was the size of the sample group responding to the questionnaire. The sample size was twenty-five students and their parents. A more accurate survey might be conducted if a larger number of respondents were to be surveyed using different school systems.

Another limitation of this study was the fact that homework procedures had been in effect in this classroom since the beginning of the school year. These procedures may have influenced the opinions of the students and their parents.

Definition of Terms

Homework. School work completed at home, but related to school work and assigned by the teacher is defined as homework. This will include drill, such as math facts, and pleasure reading for a purpose.

Primary Student. Children enrolled in grade levels first through third are defined as primary students.

Primary Parents. Parents of children enrolled in grade levels first through third are defined as primary parents.

Significance of Project

After reading literature about homework, the researcher became interested in the attitudes of the students with whom she works. Using the research as a guide to develop questions, the researcher developed a survey for her third grade class at an elementary school. Since parents need to support their children in their educational endeavors, the researcher was also interested in their opinions about homework.

Finally, the researcher wanted to compare the student and parent surveys for any significant information related to homework planning in her classroom in the future.

Secondly, the results may be of interest to other third grade teachers in the New Bremen School District or teachers in other districts that have characteristics similar to New Bremen.

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

The purpose of this chapter was to review the literature concerning homework in the primary grades. Four areas were reviewed. The first section provides an overview of the history of homework. The second section explores the opinions of students described in existing literature. The third section examines parent opinions on homework in the primary grades. The last section presents some positive and negative effects of homework as they relate to the primary grades.

History of Homework

Although homework is a traditional method employed by teachers for decades, the question remains concerning its effectiveness. Through the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, homework has changed its focus from the routines of the colonial period to the demands of the space age. Teachers' perceptions are no longer the only insights into homework. Parents' and students' input are sought and beneficial. Throughout history homework has had both positive and negative consequences.

Homework in the early colonial period of our society consisted of memorization. (Doyle and Barber, 1990). Bible passages, as well as dates and literature passages, were expected to be recited from memory. With a limited supply of books available to the public and communities scattered in isolated areas, the local school was considered the source of all knowledge.

Later changes occurred, John Dewey's concept of learning brought about changes in education. School learning including homework was to be related to the interests of the learner and to focus on current problems. (Cooper, 1989).

Since World War I factors have continued to bring change to the homework issue. Urbanization brought more people together. The mass-media industry began to make information available daily to urban and rural residents. Knowledge was increasing rapidly and was readily available, the school was no longer considered the source of all knowledge. (Locke, 1991).

In 1959, with the launch of the Russian Sputnik, a new emphasis was placed on homework. The public opinion was that we were behind, other countries were more knowledgeable, and in an effort to catch up and regain our status, students should do more homework to learn at a more rapid pace.

School subjects of the 1960s and 1970s used new approaches that confused the parents and contributed to frustrations. Parents were busy with many families now having two parents working outside the home. These parents sometimes applauded homework and sometimes challenged it as busy work. (Locke, 1991).

Technology continued to flourish producing the computer age with more opportunity to provide learning and entertainment at home. (Doyle and Barber, 1990). Home study took root in the eighties. Courses from cooking to chemistry could be purchased on tape or cassettes. With satellite transmission and cable networks, home study continues to contribute to the life long learning process.

Research on Student Opinions

Past research seems to be limited when exploring homework from the child's viewpoint. In his review of homework surveys between 1916 and 1978, Friesen (1978) found that students believe homework helps them achieve better grades in school. This opinion remained constant over the years of his comparisons.

In addition to helping to develop skills, homework can lead to students' learning about following directions, working on their own, beginning and completing a task, managing their time, and working to their full potential. (Canter, 1988). These habits of effort and concentration will serve the students well as they progress toward later grades.

Another point that students agree upon is that the amount of homework and time spent doing homework increases as they progress through school. (Friesen, 1978). Researchers suggest ten to forty-five minutes of homework per night is a workable time range for first through third graders. (Canter, 1988). This serves as a guideline, the length of assignments must be determined by the individual needs and capabilities of the students involved.

In her research with homework, Sonna (1990) found that almost every student can learn the responsibilities of doing homework. For some students who have had good school experiences and receive recognition at home getting good grades may be motivation enough for them to do their homework. Other students may need more to motivate them to complete homework. A powerful motivational tool is positive reinforcement. (Canter, 1988). Recognizing and rewarding appropriate behavior encourages students to continue that behavior. The goal of positive reinforcement is as students gain

confidence from their homework accomplishment their self image improves, and they do their assignments independently to the best of their ability.

Rosemond (1990) has found that students assume responsibility for homework in proportion to the amount of independence their parents permit. In Rosemond's (1990) research students as young as kindergarten began to do homework. Parents are advised to encourage their children to complete their homework independently as soon as ability and maturity permit.

Research on Parent Opinions

The perceptions of parents concerning their child's homework vary with parents. (Featherstone, 1985; McCormick, 1990; Strother, 1984).

Some parents say that they lack the time to be involved with homework. In many cases both parents work, and work schedules may not permit time to help with homework. Working may leave parents tired and without the patience needed to assist their child.

Many children no longer have a nuclear family (McCormick, 1990) and alternate between parents. These circumstances can make it more difficult to provide support of a child's homework needs. Epstein (1983) in her research was able to correlate better math achievement with two-parent families.

Counselors report some parents can be over-involved, seeing their children's performance as a direct reflection of themselves. (Knorr, 1981). These parents bring too much pressure to their children and create feelings of frustration and failure. Children of these parents may be punished to relieve the parents own inadequate feelings.

Parents themselves see homework as a tradition and rate schools that give homework higher. (Locke, 1991). Homework can provide a bond between teacher, parent, and child that is beneficial to all.

Parents who are asked by their children to assist with homework report feeling pleased and important. (Locke, 1991). Many parents see homework as an opportunity to give their child individual attention. Parents who help with homework have insight into the school, its curriculum and objectives. When parents feel threatened by a child's homework assignments, they may react negatively and be antagonist toward the school. Locke (1991) found this to be especially true if the parents had additional education.

Research suggests parents would be willing to spend more time helping with homework if they felt confident. (Epstein, 1988). With corporate and school support, parents of Chicago school children were encouraged to become more involved in their child's homework. (Chicago-Sun Times, 1988). The prime purpose of this project was to encourage parents to become more supportive of their children's school progress. The research of Epstein (1988) and others show a positive correlation between success with homework and parents' positive expectations. The parents role should express to their child how much they value school achievement. The Chicago project used commercials on television, billboard signs, parent meetings, and contests to encourage participation. This program continued over a period of years and is nationally known as an outstanding example to foster communication between parents and the school.

Featherstone (1985) surveyed parents about the most important benefits of homework. Seventy-eight percent of the parents agreed that the most important benefits were initiative and responsibility.

In general parental influence on homework is considered powerful. Although the structure of the nuclear family and busy schedules have created more pressure for parents, research does suggest positive benefits for children when parents are able to demonstrate that they value homework and school achievement. Many parents anticipate and support the assignment of homework. They believe the schools can help them develop their child's skills.

Positive and Negative Effects of Homework

As O'Donnell (1985) reports on the learning effects of assigned homework, most findings are inconclusive, especially at the third grade, primary level. Knorr (1981) in a review of homework research for the Elementary School Journal studied seventeen projects about homework and found only four were able to show positive results between homework and achievement. Many studies contradict each other, and many are questioned as research models.

Even though homework does not appear to help students learn more, it does provide an opportunity to share what is being learned. Epstein (1988) has reported that homework is sometimes the only form of communication about school between parents and their children. Children who share their school experiences and homework have been found to achieve higher scores in reading and math achievement tests in Epstein's (1988) research.

Homework for young children should help them develop good study habits and positive attitudes about school (Cooper, 1989). With parental guidance children as young as primary school can learn to plan homework, social activities, and chores.

Rosemond (1991), a child psychologist, states that the purpose of homework is to strengthen academic skills, but he also views homework as a character building experience. Responsibility and independence are listed at the top of Rosemond's (1991) list. Teachers and parents also rate these qualities highly when they are asked about the purpose of homework. (Featherstone, 1985).

Another positive effect of homework is that it reinforces the idea that learning can take place away from the school building. (Cooper, 1989). Children need to be encouraged that learning takes place in many different settings and that they will be learning throughout their lifetime.

Homework is criticized for many different reasons. The researcher will discuss some problems that are most related to third graders.

Palardy (1988) states that homework can interfere with the development of well-rounded children. Children need time for physical and social activities. Excess amounts of homework can take time away from out-of-school activities.

Children have different ability levels and will achieve at different levels (Epstein and Pinkow, 1988). This puts an extra burden on low-ability, slow children, they must spend more time doing homework. Individualization of homework assignments helps to adjust for ability, rate, and learning style, but it does require expert planning and more teacher time.

When homework is only routine drill results may be counterproductive. These assignments can be boring and do not require higher level thinking. Young learners need feedback about their learning. The more immediate the feedback the more successful the learning. (Palardy, 1988). When homework is taken home, returned, and corrected the length of time for feedback is increased.

The child who struggles because of low ability or the child who is not motivated and looking for an easy way out of homework may resort to cheating to complete homework assignments. Teachers and parents need to be alert to these factors as they guide children in developing skills and good character traits.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

In this chapter the researcher presents information about the subjects involved in this study, the study setting, and the procedure for developing the surveys. The survey questions are discussed in detail. Finally, the data collection and analysis methods used are described.

Subjects

The subjects of the study were a heterogeneous group of twenty-five students in third grade. Chronologically each was eight or nine years old. Eighteen have attended this school exclusively for public education. Ten of the subjects were girls and fifteen were boys. Eight students left their homeroom to participate in accelerated groups of grade level reading and math classes. One student attends a learning disabilities class for the subjects of reading and math. Nineteen of the students live within the limits of the village, six live in the country.

The parents of the students assigned to the researcher's section served as subjects also. The parents range in age from the late twenties to the age of fifty. All are presently employed. When asked to categorize their work, the forty six respondents categorized their work as follows: self-employed - ten; professional - twenty-two; and factory - fourteen. All parents responding lived in two-parent households.

Setting

This study was conducted in a rural, village community in northwest Ohio. The village has a population of approximately three thousand residents. Two larger factories employ community members, as well as many from the surrounding areas. The rural area contains tillable, fertile soil used in crop production. The German Heritage of the community is reflected in the architecture and well-maintained buildings. Community members work in professional occupations, factory employment, and agricultural jobs.

The school was a kindergarten through twelfth grade system, located together in one building. Approximately nine hundred students attend this public school. The original building was built in the 1930s as a high school, in the 1950s additions were added and elementary classes were housed in the same building. The latest addition was added in the 1990s, allowing for three sections of each grade level. Over the past ten years enrollment has increased.

Instrumentation

In order to conduct this study the researcher developed two questionnaires, one for students and one for parents. Each questionnaire is an eight-item yes-no instrument concerning the opinions of third grade students and their parents about homework. The questionnaires were designed to compare male and female responses. The questionnaires were field tested in Department of Teacher Education 503, with class participants helping to make appropriate modifications.

On the student questionnaire, question number one (see Appendix A) sought to determine the attitude of students about homework. Doyle (1990) states that girls are

more likely to respond positively to doing homework. The researcher wished to validate that finding with respect to her own situation.

Questions number two and four sought to determine parent involvement from the perspective of the students. Epstein (1988) in her research showed a positive correlation between success with homework and parents' positive expectations.

Question number three was designed to determine if students were practicing skills on their own. The researcher recommended this practice to students when no specific homework was assigned. It would be helpful for the researcher to know this about the subjects since this voluntary practice could be as effective as assigned homework.

Palardy (1988) states that homework can interfere with the development of the well-rounded child. This finding prompted the researcher to ask question number five. This question asks whether or not a student had been unable to attend an activity because of homework assignments. Our community is small and school events are well attended. Third graders are also involved in out-of-school events such as scouting and church events.

Questions six and seven sought to determine if a special place or time was involved in completing homework. Canter (1988) suggests that both are beneficial to developing responsibility for homework assignments. The researcher wished to determine if her students had developed a special plan for time or place.

It is the researcher's opinion that beginning homework assignments for young students should be easy for the student, be turned in the next day, and returned to the student as quickly as possible with positive feedback for the student. Many textbook series offer suggestions for projects to be completed at home by the students. The

researcher wondered what the students thought about longer projects that would be completed during a school week.

There were eight questions on the student questionnaire. The questions were developed through literature reading and personal experience of the researcher.

On the parent questionnaire, question number one (see Appendix B) sought to determine whether the parents of the subjects, third graders, believe that homework is beneficial to their children. O'Donnell (1985) states that the effects of assigned homework on learning are inconclusive, especially at the primary level. Rosemond (1991) viewed homework as a method of building good character traits. The researcher was interested in the parents' response concerning whether homework is a benefit to the students in her classroom.

Questions number two and three asked the parents to respond to a specific amount of time and frequency for homework each evening. Canter (1988) suggests from ten minutes to a maximum of forty-five minutes for homework each evening. The researcher has had homework assigned twice a week with an anticipated time from ten to thirty minutes during the majority of the school year. The researcher has been considering four evenings a week and wanted the input of parents concerning frequency and time period for homework.

The fourth question asked parents to agree or disagree that homework should be an extension of a daily lesson. It is the researcher's opinion that in the primary grade this is very important. As much as possible, homework should be an independent activity and designed with the maximum success for each child in mind.

Research about individual learning styles and capacity to learn have demonstrated the need to present lessons using different approaches. These same approaches could be

applied to homework assignments. Question number five asks parents' opinions about individualizing homework assignments.

Questions six, seven, and eight are very closely related to questions asked of the students on their questionnaire. In question six, the researcher wished to determine if parents thought homework was interfering with attending other school activities. Questions seven and eight asked about parents' involvement with their child's homework. The researcher was aware of the importance of these responses to her students' success. The researcher would be able to send parent communication to help involve parents if these questions were answered with negative responses.

Data Collection

On May 1, 1994, the third grade students completed their pencil and paper questionnaires in their classroom with the guidance of the researcher. All twenty-five subjects were present.

On the afternoon of May 1, 1994, the students took home a parent questionnaire for each parent. A letter of transmittal stated the purpose and value of the questionnaire. Refer to Appendix C. A period of one week was suggested for the return of the questionnaire. Forty-six of the fifty parent questionnaires were returned. All the questionnaires were hand tallied and transferred to charts using percentages for comparisons.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The intent of this study was to survey third graders and their parents concerning homework behaviors and related attitudes. The researcher constructed an eight-item survey to collect the data. The data was tallied and presented, using a table format with percentages for comparison. The data collected from the parents' survey is presented and analyzed first, followed by the students' survey data and an analysis.

Presentation of Parents' Opinions

From the fifty questionnaires that were sent home, forty-six parents responded to the questions. For a complete summary of the results, refer to Table I (page 19). Note that the questions from the study are in the first column. The columns to the right are the responses of yes or no to each question. All of the numbers are expressed as percents. The responses of fathers and mothers are first reported separately, and then a total of the responses are listed.

One hundred percent (100%) of the fathers and ninety-six percent (96%) of the mothers felt that third graders benefit from homework. Together, ninety-eight percent (98%) of the parents responded positively to assigning homework in third grade.

Eighty-three percent (83%) of the fathers and seventy percent (70%) of the mothers felt that thirty minutes was not too much homework for third grade. These results constitute a total positive response from seventy-six percent (76%) of the

TABLE I

PARENTS' OPINIONS
OF HOMEWORK AT THE THIRD GRADE LEVEL
(N=25)

Question	Men (N=23)		Women (N=23)		All (N=46)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Do you think third graders benefit from homework?	100%	0%	96%	4%	98%	2%
Do you think 30 minutes of homework is too much?	17%	83%	30%	70%	24%	76%
Do you think homework should be given daily?	48%	52%	30%	70%	39%	61%
Do you think homework should be an extension of a lesson taught that day?	100%	0%	100%	0%	100%	0%
Do you think homework should be individualized in order to consider student differences in learning?	74%	26%	78%	22%	76%	24%
Do you think homework should be given on a night when there is a school sponsored event?	26%	74%	13%	87%	22%	78%
Do you think parents should help with homework?	83%	17%	74%	26%	78%	22%
Do you think parents should check homework when it is completed?	100%	0%	96%	4%	98%	2%

NOTE: Male subjects (N=23); Female subjects (N=23)

parents. The fathers almost split evenly between yes and no responses when commenting on the question about daily homework. Seventy percent (70%) of the mothers did not believe homework should be given daily. A total parent response of sixty-one percent (61%) did not favor daily homework. All respondents felt homework should be an extension of a lesson taught that day.

Mothers and fathers were in close agreement on the question asking whether homework should be individualized in order to consider student differences in learning. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the mothers and seventy-four percent (74%) of the fathers answered yes.

When asked whether homework should be given on a night when there is a school sponsored event seventy-four percent (74%) of the fathers and eighty-seven percent (87%) of the mothers said no.

Eighty-three percent (83%) of the fathers and seventy-four percent (74%) of the mothers felt they should help with homework. A nearly unanimous positive response was given to the question which asked if parents should check their child's completed homework. One hundred percent (100%) of the fathers said yes and ninety-six percent (96%) of mothers agreed.

Discussion of Parents' Opinions

The researcher's personal experiences with homework and the results of the questionnaire compare favorably with the current literature concerning homework.

The parents surveyed in the study seem to agree with the research that suggests that children benefit from homework. (Locke, 1991). Ninety-eight percent (98%) of the third graders' parents felt their child did benefit. Some parents suggested that the

homework be a practice of a skill they are being taught, such as basic multiplication facts. One hundred percent (100%) of the parents agree that the homework should be an extension of a lesson taught that day.

Locke (1991) in his research found that parents feel good about helping with homework and students benefit from their parents' involvement with their homework. The parents in this study seem to agree, since ninety-eight percent (98%) think parents should check homework when it is completed. Seventy-eight percent (78%) of the parents thought they should help with homework. One parent added that she liked to learn about her child's educational experiences, and helping with homework kept her aware of what was being studied at school.

Most parents, seventy-six percent (76%), felt thirty minutes of homework was not too much. This is similar to the guidelines of research. Canter (1991) recommended ten to forty-five minutes for third graders. Sixty-one percent (61%) of the parents thought third graders should not be given daily homework. A majority of students were assigned homework twice a week in this researcher's classroom, the researcher feels this may have influenced the parents' response.

About three-fourths of all parents felt homework should be individualized for individual differences. One parent suggested that each school subject should have an individualized homework assignment each evening.

School events in this community offer entertainment and have good attendance from the students and the public. Of the responses of all parents, seventy-eight percent (78%) believed that homework should not be given on a night when there is a school sponsored event.

When comparing father and mother responses to the questions, they were frequently quite similar. The greatest difference occurred on question three where twenty-two percent (22%) more mothers than fathers did not support daily homework. On questions one, seven, and eight, there was almost one hundred percent (100%) agreement by both parents.

Presentation of Students' Opinions

The twenty-five students in the researcher's third grade class were selected as subjects by being assigned to the researcher's section. The students completed their questionnaires individually in class with the researcher's assistance.

For a summary of the results, refer to Table II (page 23). Note that the questions from the study are in the first column. The columns to the right are the responses of yes or no to each question. The tallied responses of yes or no are presented as percents. The boys' responses are in the first column, followed by the girls' responses, then the total responses of the group are presented. There were fifteen boys and ten girls in the study.

When asked whether each one liked homework, the girls responded more favorably than the boys. Seventy percent (70%) of the girls said that they liked homework. Epstein (1988) in his research also noted that girls more frequently say that they enjoy homework than boys.

One hundred percent (100%) of the girls said that their parents help them with homework. Seventy-three percent (73%) of the boys reported that they received help with homework. When asked if parents check their homework, eighty percent (80%) of

TABLE II

STUDENTS' OPINIONS
OF HOMEWORK AT THE THIRD GRADE LEVEL
(N = 25)

Question	Boys (N=15)		Girls (N=10)		All (N=25)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No
Do you like doing homework?	40%	60%	70%	30%	52%	48%
Do your parents help you with homework?	73%	27%	100%	0%	84%	16%
When homework is not assigned, do you do school work, such as reading or fact practice?	67%	33%	70%	30%	68%	32%
Do your parents check your homework when you are finished?	53%	47%	80%	20%	64%	36%
Have you ever not attended an activity because you had homework?	40%	60%	30%	70%	36%	64%
Do you have a special place to do homework?	27%	73%	70%	30%	44%	56%
Do you have a special time to do homework?	47%	53%	80%	20%	60%	40%
Do you like doing projects that might be assigned on Monday and collected on Friday?	73%	27%	100%	0%	84%	16%

NOTE: Male subjects (N=15); Female subjects (N=10)

the girls said yes, while only fifty-three percent (53%) of the boys said that parents checked their work.

Only three percentage points (3%) separated the girls over the boys when they answered the question concerning the practice of school subjects when homework has not been assigned. Seventy percent (70%) of the girls said that they did and sixty-seven percent (67%) of the boys agreed.

When the third graders were asked whether they had not attended an activity because of homework, seventy percent (70%) of the girls said no, and sixty percent (60%) of the boys said no also.

The majority of the girls did have a special place and time for doing homework. Seventy percent (70%) of the girls had a special place and eighty percent (80%) also had a special time. Only twenty-seven percent (27%) of the boys had a special place, but a higher percentage had a special time, forty-seven percent (47%).

One hundred percent (100%) of the girls and seventy-three percent (73%) of the boys were in favor of doing longer assignments that might be assigned on Monday and collected on Friday.

Discussion of Students' Opinions

Despite the fact that most of the results of the student questionnaire compare favorably with research findings and the researcher's own experience, there are some surprises.

The researcher was surprised to learn that third graders seemed in favor of assigned homework projects that would last over a period of days. One hundred percent (100%) of the girls agreed and seventy-three percent (73%) of the boys were in favor

of project assignments. Most of the researcher's past experience has involved assignments due the next day. The short time-span was selected to help the students retain the information needed to do the assignment, as well as give feedback and reinforcement right away. Longer projects could use a different approach, allowing for creativity and additional family involvement.

The students and parents in this study were in agreement in their responses to working together on homework. Agreeing with their parents, the students said that most of them received help when completing and checking their homework. One hundred percent (100%) of the girls said their parents help them and eighty percent (80%) said that their parents check the finished work. In contrast most of the boys seventy-three percent (73%) said they receive help, but only about half, fifty-three percent (53%) said their parents check their finished work. The researcher finds this to be a very interesting response. The researcher had not located literature that compares boys to girls and their opinions about homework at the primary level, but this small sample brings some questions to mind. Are girls more insecure about working on their own? Do parents feel homework is less important for boys? Many scenarios could be explored further.

Other differences between the responses of boys and girls are evident when students were asked if they had a special time or place to do homework. A higher percentage of girls have a special place and time to complete homework. It is the researcher's observation that girls at this age level exhibit more maturity than boys. Girls seem to spend more time planning what they will do and when they will complete a task.

A slightly higher percent of the boys had not attended an activity because they had to complete their homework. The majority, or almost two-thirds, of the total group had not had homework interfere with attending an activity. Rosemond's (1989) research found that too much homework could prevent students from participation in other activities, most of these students were able to complete their homework and attend most activities.

Almost an equal amount of boys and girls practice school work when no specific homework is assigned. A total of sixty-eight percent (68%) practice the skills they are mastering in school. This is a credit to the students, parents, and teachers. In the primary grades reading is taught requiring the learning of a large number of vocabulary words. In the first three grades, vocabulary lists are given for practice. This is usually not called homework, but it could be. Reading practice is encouraged at home, again it is not called homework but it helps improve the skills of reading. Math facts have a similar relationship to math achievement. Students are encouraged to practice facts at home. Parents support these suggestions. In the researcher's school, teachers send home weekly grade level letters to inform the parents about the learning activities at school. Students, parents, and teachers benefit from working together.

CHAPTER V

Introduction

In Chapter One the researcher presented an explanation of the reasons for conducting the survey concerning homework. The Second Chapter was a review of the current literature about homework. Chapter Three included descriptions of the subjects and setting, as well as information stating how the questionnaires were developed and the data collected. The results of the study are stated and analyzed in the Fourth Chapter. In this last chapter the researcher will discuss conclusions gained from the study and give recommendations.

Summary

Homework at the primary level in the researcher's school has been an issue of concern. For many years a board policy had stated that no more than twenty minutes of homework be assigned to any elementary student. This has recently been changed to an open-ended policy that allows the teacher more flexibility in developing a plan for the classroom. With this background, the researcher decided to review the research literature about homework and to survey students and parents of her classroom about their opinions on homework. The researcher wanted to compare the surveys with the literature concerning homework. Also the researcher wanted to compare the opinions of third grade boys and third grade girls within the researcher's classroom. Finally, the researcher wished to compare her classroom students with their parents' opinions about the subject of homework.

Although homework is a word used for decades in education, the method has met with many changes over the years. Research about learning, changes in society and families, as well as technological changes have had dramatic effects on the concept of homework.

Parents are frequently asked their opinions about the effects of homework, and generally give positive feedback on its effects. Primary students are not represented as well in the literature as their older schoolmates.

In Chapter Three the subjects and the setting were described, plus the procedure used to develop the questionnaires. Information concerning how the data was collected, tallied, and finally the analysis were included.

Chapter Four presented the data by listing percentages for each question as tabulated from the yes or no responses. Two tables were used to display the results. Each table compared males to females and a second column listed total group percentages.

Conclusions

Student Survey

In this survey, it appears that girls in the researcher's classroom are more positive toward doing homework assignments than boys. Although individual differences within the sexes vary greatly, the researcher's experience has been that girls at the third grade level are more likely to strive to be homework stars. More girls than boys in this study choose a special time and place to complete homework, suggesting to the researcher that the girls are maturing and beginning to develop habits of discipline and responsibility.

The majority of the students received help from their parents in this study. This is very encouraging because parent involvement provides a positive effect on the students' educational development. The parents' active participation contributed to assigned homework as well as the practice of school work without assignment. Two-thirds of the students in this study practiced school work without an assignment. The researcher believes that parents in this community value education and are working to communicate this to their children.

The students in this study responded positively to project homework assignments. The researcher will experiment with this conclusion in future class settings. It will be an opportunity to introduce new approaches that can individualize for ability and learning style. Cooperative learning and team projects can involve social lessons.

Parent Survey

In this survey, the parents believe that homework benefits third graders. These parents did provide support and assistance with homework for their children. The most important finding here is that the parents demonstrated an interest and support of their child's learning. One of the positive points of primary homework is that it provides the opportunity for parents to demonstrate to their child that they value learning, and that learning continues beyond the school setting.

The majority of the parents in this study were against daily homework. The researcher is still unsure what influence the present homework policy had on this response. Further exploration of this factor with another group of subjects might remove the doubt in this issue.

Parents of the study favor homework that is an extension of daily lessons and individualizing homework assignment. Both ideas relate to good teaching methods, and what educators know about learning.

In this study the parents of third graders feel that their children should not have homework when there is a school sponsored event their children could attend. The close-knit, small community atmosphere probably contributes to this feeling. That same community spirit seems to support learning which is a benefit to students, parents, and teachers.

Recommendations

The researcher would like to recommend that in the early years traditional homework assignments should be used to develop good study habits and learning skills. This work should extend beyond reading and math skills and help young learners become familiar with recently developed methods of storing and retrieving information, such as computers. Homework should be thought of as a means of learning how to learn, not just practice.

The researcher would also recommend that students be allowed to have a role in creating out-of-class work. The teacher should encourage initiative and allow freedom in some homework assignments. Students should be encouraged to use their creativity and higher-level thinking skills whenever possible. Assignments should be planned considering student abilities and learning styles, as well as their interests.

Students, parents, and teachers will benefit from the establishment of a homework plan. Parents should be informed about the amount and kinds of homework.

Cooperation between the home and school is a positive way to develop sound education progress for the student.

The researcher recommends that homework assignments have a purpose and be clearly understood by the students. More able students benefit from projects and independent study, while slower students need more routine assignments with class practice to insure success. Both groups benefit from sharing together.

The researcher recommends that a record of homework assignments be maintained. When the records are analyzed patterns of error can be observed and used to plan lessons to improve weaknesses. Individual records can help determine a weak skill area or the lack of developing study habits. When students spend their time completing a task they deserve recognition. Specific praise can strengthen an attitude or encourage a good habit. Feedback from the teacher helps a child determine the quality of his work.

In this study the researcher found that homework seemed to be supported by the third graders and their parents in the researcher's classroom. As teachers, we acknowledge that student characteristics, subject matter, and grade level are but a few of the many influences on the value of homework. Homework for primary students should help the student develop good study habits, foster a positive attitude toward school, and help to communicate the idea that learning can take place at home. Homework assignments that stress these objectives will help to build a foundation for success.

APPENDIX A

THIRD GRADE HOMEWORK SURVEY

Student Survey

Please complete this survey by circling yes or no to the following questions about homework. Homework is school work assigned by a teacher to be completed at home.

Girls please circle girl. Boys please circle boy.

Girl

Boy

- | | | | |
|----|---|-----|----|
| 1. | Do you like doing homework? | Yes | No |
| 2. | Do your parents help you with homework? | Yes | No |
| 3. | When homework is not assigned, do you do school work, such as reading or fact practice? | Yes | No |
| 4. | Do your parents check your homework when you are finished? | Yes | No |
| 5. | Have you ever not attended an activity because you had homework? | Yes | No |
| 6. | Do you have a special place to do homework? | Yes | No |
| 7. | Do you have a special time to do homework? | Yes | No |
| 8. | Do you like doing projects that might be assigned on Monday and collected on Friday? | Yes | No |

APPENDIX B

THIRD GRADE HOMEWORK SURVEY

Parent Survey

Please circle the category that applies to you.

Male	Female			
Age Range:	20-29	30-39	40-49	50-59
Household:	Single Parent	Two Parent		
Occupation:	Self-employed	Professional	Factory	

Please complete this survey by circling yes or no to the following questions about homework for third graders. This survey refers to homework as work assigned by the teacher.

- | | | | |
|----|--|-----|----|
| 1. | Do you think third graders benefit from homework? | Yes | No |
| 2. | Do you think 30 minutes of homework is too much? | Yes | No |
| 3. | Do you think homework should be given daily? | Yes | No |
| 4. | Do you think homework should be an extension of a lesson taught that day? | Yes | No |
| 5. | Do you think homework should be individualized in order to consider student differences in learning? | Yes | No |
| 6. | Do you think homework should be given on a night when there is a school sponsored event? | Yes | No |
| 7. | Do you think parents should help with homework? | Yes | No |
| 8. | Do you think parents should check homework when it is completed? | Yes | No |

Parents: Thank you for your help. You may write any other opinions about homework in third grade that you would like to share.

APPENDIX C

May 6, 1994

Dear Parents,

The attached questionnaire concerns homework at the third grade level. During the past year I have included math homework twice a week. After some reading and observations of third graders, I am considering changing this schedule.

I'm interested in your opinions about homework. I've included a questionnaire which I will consider as I make decisions about homework for next year. I will also ask some questions of your children to be completed at school.

Two copies are included, one for each parent. Please complete the questionnaire and return it to school as soon as possible, no later than _____.

Names are not necessary. I would welcome any comments you might have concerning homework.

Thank you for your time and continued support of your school.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Sally Dicke

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